

Case Study

Nacadia® Healing Forest Garden

Denmark

Module 7

<https://nacadia.ku.dk/english/>

Nacadia® Healing Forest Garden contributes significantly to mental health rehabilitation and public wellbeing in Denmark, serving as a pioneering model for evidence-based nature therapy integrated into healthcare systems.

Location

Located within Hørsholm Arboretum, this therapy garden blends wild forest aesthetics with therapeutic design, featuring diverse natural zones from dense woodlands to open meadows, supporting recovery for over 1,000 patients since 2011 through university-led programs.





This 1.5-hectare garden is predominantly covered by native Danish forest and woodland, with broadleaf trees such as oak, beech, birch, and ash creating a restorative canopy, alongside shrubs, perennials, and wildflower meadows that mimic natural ecosystems. It includes specialized "rooms" like a sensory garden, wild forest paths, and a permaculture-inspired horticultural area, all fenced for privacy yet integrated into the larger arboretum's 35 hectares of mixed conifer and deciduous plantings.

Linking Research, Healthcare, and Landscape Design for Therapeutic Partnerships

The University of Copenhagen's Department of Geosciences and Natural Resource Management believes this design provides a scalable model for healing gardens worldwide, uniting landscape architects, psychologists, medical experts, and public health authorities to address stress-related illnesses while fostering social inclusion and environmental stewardship in urban-adjacent areas.



Activities & Commercial Model

Nacadia® experiences integrate clinical referrals from hospitals, prisons, and GPs, including:

- 10-week Nature-Based Therapy (NBT) programs combining mindfulness, horticulture, and group socialization for stress, PTSD, and burnout recovery.
- A progression through "natural rooms"—from sheltered introversion zones to challenging wild forest areas—to support phased rehabilitation.
- Research trials funded by the Danish Health Authority and pharma partners, evaluating outcomes like reduced sick leave via national databases.
- Welcome pavilion with therapy spaces, sensory tools, and all-year accessibility.
- Pay-to-participate corporate wellness modules for teams (DKK 5,000–10,000/group).
- Surrounding arboretum recreation linking to public trails, with over 100,000 annual visitors contributing to indirect tourism revenue.

Trees and Plants



Reducing emissions



Wellbeing



Sustainability and Trees



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Trees and Plants

Green Friendly Approaches

Trees and Plants To allow flora and fauna to thrive naturally, certain zones are left unmanaged for biodiversity, with replanting of fallen natives using on-site mulch from bark and branches to sustain the life cycle. Permaculture principles guide planting, promoting self-sustaining ecosystems with edible and medicinal plants integrated into therapy activities.

Energy

The garden endeavors to be energy-efficient with solar-powered pathways, rainwater harvesting for irrigation, and passive solar greenhouses for year-round horticultural sessions. Rechargeable tools and low-energy lighting minimize footprint.

Waste They follow the mantra of “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle,” with composting of garden waste into soil amendments and zero-plastic policies in therapy materials—ensuring very little is discarded.

Wellbeing Promote Healthy and Enjoyable Activities

Therapy activities are designed as a positive choice for body and mind, providing opportunities for land-based engagement including Denmark’s first evidence-based forest therapy walks. Whether participants arrive for guided mindfulness or horticultural tasks, they leave with improved mental resilience, as validated by studies showing significant EQ-VAS health gains. Nacadia® makes nature and wellbeing accessible to all, including underserved groups like PTSD patients, so everyone can reap the restorative benefits of designed natural landscapes.

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